

MISS SUSAN (*with a slight shudder*). I deeply regret, Miss Willoughby—— (*Sees MISS FANNY reading quickly to herself.*) Oh, Fanny! If you please, my dear.

(*Takes the book gently from her.*)

MISS WILLOUGHBY. I thank you.

(*She knits severely.*)

MISS FANNY (*a little rebel*). Miss Susan is looking at the end.

(*MISS SUSAN closes the book guiltily.*)

MISS SUSAN (*apologetically*). Forgive my partiality for romance, Mary. I fear 'tis the mark of an old maid.

MISS WILLOUGHBY. Susan, that word!

MISS SUSAN (*sweetly*). 'Tis what I am. And you also, Mary, my dear.

MISS FANNY (*defending her sister*). Miss Susan, I protest.

MISS WILLOUGHBY (*sternly truthful*). Nay, sister, 'tis true. We are known everywhere now, Susan, you and I, as the old maids of Quality Street. (*General discomfort.*)

MISS SUSAN. I am happy Phoebe will not be an old maid.

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THE PLAYS OF
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822 B269
Ephemeral
QUALITY STREET

A COMEDY

WITHDRAWN
FROM COLLECTION
CLP
KNOXVILLE BRANCH

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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Diary of Helen M. Smith

ACT I

ACT I

THE BLUE AND WHITE ROOM

The scene is the blue and white room in the house of the Misses Susan and Phoebe Throssel in Quality Street; and in this little country town there is a satisfaction about living in Quality Street which even religion cannot give. Through the bowed window at the back we have a glimpse of the street. It is pleasantly broad and grass-grown, and is linked to the outer world by one demure shop, whose door rings a bell every time it opens and shuts. Thus by merely peeping, every one in Quality Street can know at once who has been buying a Whimsy cake, and usually why. This bell is the most familiar sound of Quality Street. Now and again ladies pass in their pattens, a maid perhaps protecting them with an umbrella, for flakes of snow are falling discreetly. Gentlemen in the street are an event; but, see, just as we raise the curtain, there goes the recruiting sergeant to remind us that we are in the period of the Napoleonic wars. If he were to look in at the window

of the blue and white room all the ladies there assembled would draw themselves up ; they know him for a rude fellow who smiles at the approach of maiden ladies and continues to smile after they have passed. However, he lowers his head to-day so that they shall not see him, his present design being converse with the Misses Throssel's maid.

The room is one seldom profaned by the foot of man, and everything in it is white or blue. Miss Phoebe is not present, but here are Miss Susan, Miss Willoughby and her sister Miss Fanny, and Miss Henrietta Turnbull. Miss Susan and Miss Willoughby, alas, already wear caps ; but all the four are dear ladies, so refined that we ought not to be discussing them without a more formal introduction. There seems no sufficient reason why we should choose Miss Phoebe as our heroine rather than any one of the others, except, perhaps, that we like her name best. But we gave her the name, so we must support our choice and say that she is slightly the nicest, unless, indeed, Miss Susan is nicer.

Miss Fanny is reading aloud from a library book while the others sew or knit. They are making garments for our brave soldiers now far away fighting the Corsican Ogre.

MISS FANNY. ' . . . And so the day passed and evening came, black, mysterious, and ghost-like. The wind moaned unceasingly like a shivering spirit, and the vegetation rustled uneasily as if something weird and terrifying were about to happen. Suddenly out of the darkness there emerged a *Man*.

(She says the last word tremulously but without looking up. The listeners knit more quickly.)

The unhappy Camilla was standing lost in reverie when, without pausing to advertise her of his intentions, he took both her hands in his.

(By this time the knitting has stopped, and all are listening as if mesmerised.)

Slowly he gathered her in his arms——

(MISS SUSAN gives an excited little cry.)

MISS FANNY. And rained hot, burning——'

MISS WILLOUGHBY. Sister!

MISS FANNY (*greedily*). 'On eyes, mouth——'

MISS WILLOUGHBY (*sternly*). Stop. Miss Susan, I am indeed surprised you should bring such an amazing, indelicate tale from the library.